

1. COVE-EAST SIDE, Shippan

Neighborhood identity and passions run deep in the Cove-East Side and Shippan neighborhoods. Part of the reason has to do with their clear-cut boundaries. Cove-East Side is bounded on the north by the I-95 highway and Conrail railroad, and on the east, south and west by water bodies. Shippan is in many ways an island apart—framed on the east, south and west by the Long Island Sound, with a narrow isthmus on the north, flanked by parks.

Another reason is that the 18,000 residents of these two neighborhoods have felt besieged. The limited roads providing access to the neighborhoods are often choked with traffic. Several neighborhood parks are also citywide destinations, creating use and traffic conflicts. Industry and offices are vibrant, but are often perceived as nuisances. The neighborhoods are largely built out, meaning that nearly every development proposal is fraught with controversy.

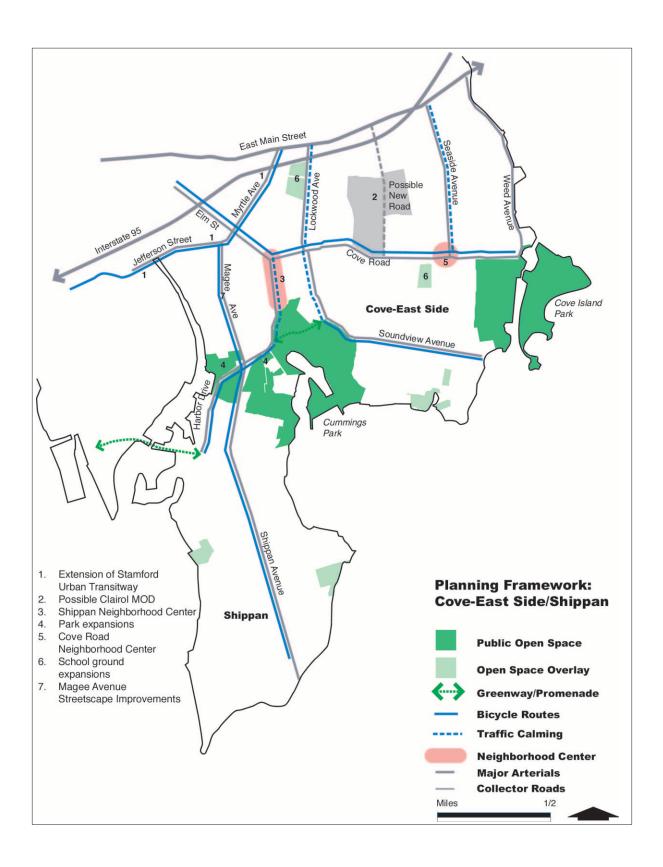
The plan for this neighborhood above all else must address these real and perceived quality of life concerns. Citywide priorities must be accommodated with regard to diversity, for example. But Cove-East Side and Shippan residents must feel that they are ultimately in control of their neighborhoods' destiny.

Goal A:

Maintain and celebrate the diversity of Stamford's population and employment.

In the Cove-East Side and Shippan neighborhoods, the key challenge is to maintain the neighborhoods' current extraordinary diversity.

These neighborhoods are already socially diverse, with a median household income of \$75,000 balanced by the fact that 13 percent of the population earns under \$25,000; and one-third of the residents are Black or Hispanic. The expensive homes of southern Shippan and the Wallacks Drive areas are balanced by the modest homes of the greater part of Cove-East Side. There is also a scattering of subsidized apartment buildings and public housing. The challenges are to assure that the current inventory is maintained, and that any new multifamily housing developments are compatible with their neighborhood context.





The waterfront plan puts a priority on water-dependent recreation and uses.

The Cove-East Side neighborhood also accommodates a significant amount of industrial uses, the City's sewage treatment plant and largest public works yard, and several marinas. These uses are essential to the economic vitality and workings of the city. They should remain, with the challenge of assuring that their potential negative impacts are mitigated.

Strategies:

1A1. Continue the one-for-one replacement policy for all publicly supported housing; and strive to maintain the total inventory of other publicly assisted affordable housing. The redevelopment of the Housing Authority's Oak Park complex has been debated. It should be contin-

gent upon providing the same number of similarly priced and sized units within the neighborhood, replacement units for existing tenants, and the active participation of tenants and neighborhood residents in planning the new development and replacement strategy. The City should also identify, assess and seek to forestall the risk that privately owned housing built with public assistance would, as Federal and State tenant income restrictions expire, be converted into market-rate units.

1A2. Promote housing in connection with "Main Street" enhancements in the Shippan Avenue business district. Shippan Avenue, from Cove Road to Cummings Park, invites a neighborhood-oriented business district with ground floor stores and upstairs apartments. Adjoining parcels (e.g., in the Halloween Boulevard area) may also be suited for low-density, multifamily apartments. The Shippan Avenue business district area offers services and transit service to Downtown and the Transportation Center, therefore reducing the dependence on cars, further reducing the need for extensive on-site parking, and freeing up tenant income for housing.

1A3. Prioritize the upper East Branch for water-dependent industry. Most of the upper portion of the East Branch has industry on both its east and west banks,

Opposite: Key recommendations have to do with protecting neighborhood quality of life from the intrusions of development and city-wide attractions.

and much of this industry is water-dependent. Additionally, portions of this waterfront have access to rail, making it particularly suited as a location for construction-related operations that depend on both rail and waterborne shipping. A good portion of the East Branch's industrial property is publicly owned, or was upgraded thanks to City largesse and intervention. Finally, most of the rest of the city's waterfront is occupied by offices and housing, or is the subject of proposals for much the same. The upper portion of the East Branch is the last place in which, as a practical matter, water-dependent industry can be concentrated. This might also include carters and transfer stations that take advantage of this area's water or rail access. However, such uses should be carefully sited and planned to assure that their negative impacts on the environment, view corridors and traffic are minimized.

- **1A4.** Protect and promote water-dependent uses, recreation and boating. Water-dependent uses include ferries, water taxis, boating, marinas, boat repairs, dry dock and other uses dependent on marine access. All City-owned parkland should be periodically evaluated for their water-based recreational potential. Any uses or development that congests, restricts or otherwise limits the use of the harbor by commercial and recreational uses should not be allowed. The use of fill and structures should be designed so as to minimize negative impacts on coastal resources. The maintenance and protection of the existing navigation channels including timely dredging is also a priority.
- **1A5.** Upgrade the industrial district in the western portion of Cove-East Side. Some of the ideas to pursue include: (1) financial and technical assistance for improvements, tied to (2) shared parking and access and egress, as well as (3) performance-based zoning and environmentally sensitive physical improvements to make the industry better neighbors with adjoining residential areas, (4) clarification of the M-G (Manufacturing-General) and M-L (Manufacturing-Light) districts, with heavy industrial uses allowed only by Special Exception in M-G districts, and (5) design improvements (discussed later).
- **1A6.** Promote upgrades along Myrtle Avenue and in the Jefferson Street/Elm Street area. The northern frontage of Myrtle Avenue and the blocks surrounding the Jefferson Street/Elm Street intersection should be zoned for commercial businesses, to promote redevelopment. Commercial development should be tied to landscape, streetscape and traffic improvements, both on- and off-site.

Goal B:

Pursue a new "City Beautiful" movement, celebrating and enhancing the city's main corridors, greenways, waterfront, hills, historic buildings, gateways, and especially the unique qualities of Stamford's neighborhoods.

Three design features shape Cove-East Side and Shippan. The neighborhoods are surrounded on three sides by water, and feature hundreds of acres of waterfront parkland. Residential streets lined with mature trees define the neighborhood's texture. And there is only a handful of roads that provide easy access to and through the neighborhoods, and define the design image of the community.

Strategies:

1B1. Promote contextual housing development. Wherever higher density housing is built, it should be designed to be compatible with its environs. The rules for small-scale development should promote: (1) reduced curb cuts, (2) meaningful landscaping without asphalt in front, and (3) setbacks and scale consistent with those of adjoining development. The rules for any large-scale



Housing development should be contextual – to fit within the scale and character of the neighborhood.

development should promote: (1) alignments of new and existing streets, (2) building designs – especially on the perimeter – that appear to be part of the neighborhood, (3) continuous sidewalks with street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting, (4) land-scaped buffers and parking lots, and (5) greenway connections (if appropriate). In addition, the City should adopt controls on impervious materials to prevent extensive blacktopping. The City should also provide adequate parking requirements for multifamily development.

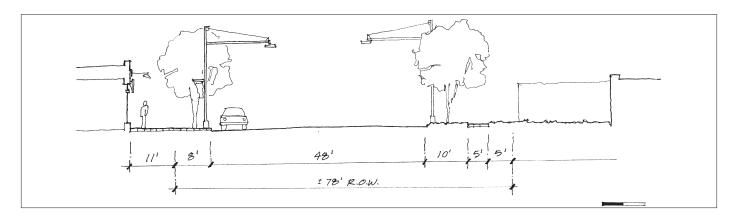
- **1B2.** Employ the proposed Streetscape Manual and, as appropriate, create Preservation and Design Districts (PDD) for the principal residential arterials. These include Cove Road, Lockwood Avenue, Seaside Avenue, Shippan Avenue south of Harbor Drive, and Weed Avenue. The guidelines would focus on promoting (1) continuous sidewalks lined with street trees, (2) attractive buildings (focusing on all types of non-single-family structures), and (3) strategically sited and attractive bus shelters. (Separate PDD guidelines would be adopted for the two commercial districts along Cove Road and Shippan Avenue.)
- **1B3.** Reinforce the special role of Elm Street as one of the radial corridors that links the Cove-East Side and Shippan neighborhoods to Downtown. This corridor should be thought of as a comprehensive experience from Cummings Park to the center of Downtown. In addition to the full range of streetscape and landscape improvements, effort should be made to link the open spaces along the corridor; articulate key intersections and gateways; create visual and physical connections to

important buildings; and promote contextual development that is oriented towards the corridor and provides for transition in scale to adjacent neighborhoods. (The Urban Design report illustrates these strategies.)

- **1B4.** Implement design guidelines for roads that create the edges of industrial districts. Interventions include rationalization of curb cuts and parking areas, aggressive landscaping to screen parking and loading areas, incentives for façade improvements, consolidation of exposed utilities, sidewalks and pedestrian improvements, and attractive gateways to industrial areas. (The Urban Design report illustrates these strategies.)
- **1B5. Make the Magee Avenue Corridor a case study in good design for an industrial district.** The PDD (Preservation and Design District) regulations should promote landscaping and attractive fencing/walls along the Magee Avenue frontages. Landscape architects, industrial designers and public art advocates (e.g., the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation) should be employed to provide industrial property owners and businesses with technical assistance as they make property investments. Industrial uses should be better organized along the lines of a modern industrial park with more clearly defined edges. Tax incentives should be considered to promote landscape upgrades. Magee Avenue is a logical place to set the standard for other industrial corridors, since the City owns much of its frontage. (Specific design ideas are illustrated in the Urban Design report.)
- **1B6. Designate neighborhood roads as official Scenic Corridors.** Many of the neighborhoods' roads Cove Road, Shippan Avenue south of Harbor Drive, Sound View Avenue, Weed Avenue and many of the roads in Shippan should be seriously considered for designation. Further documentation would be needed also to generate guidelines to protect old growth trees, water views, front lawn setbacks, and other scenic features within the corridors; and to deal with overhead wires (a particular problem on Shippan Avenue), sidewalks (a particular issue on Cove Road), and other physical features. As an alternative, a PDD (Preservation and



Landscaping and facade improvements can upgrade the image of Magee Avenue.







Public access to the waterfront must be carefully balanced with concerns of local residents about traffic and privacy.

Design District) could be considered for Shippan that focuses on the neighborhood's scenic qualities.

1B7. Promote neighborhood access to public waterfront amenities. The Cove-East Side neighborhood is already the site of the city's most popular waterfront parks, and residents are wary of

any more regional or citywide attractions. However, small-scale improvements can go a long way to enhance the access of neighborhood residents to their own waterfront. Past successes include public access to the small beach at the end of Fairview Avenue in Shippan. Future opportunities include bicycle racks and benches where public roads terminate at publicly accessible portions of the waterfront.

1B8. Promote waterfront views and access, especially in connection with any future waterfront development. The opportunities for waterfront development are quite limited. The upper reaches of the East Channel are designated for industry and water dependent industry. The remainder of the waterfront is largely fixed in its land use. There will be intermittent proposals for waterfront redevelopment. Such development should be contingent upon maximization of the public's access to, views of, and enjoyment of the waterfront. Even where uses are fixed, every opportunity should be exploited to preserve if not improve access to and/or views of the waterfront from public roads.

1B9. Provide improved non-vehicular access along Weed Avenue. This is necessary to offset a now dangerous condition as joggers and walkers commonly use this busy street. However, a Weed Avenue sidewalk or other feasible alternative would have to be designed so as to discourage worsening traffic and visitation to a neighborhood that is aggravated by traffic going to and from Cove Island Park. Traffic calming along with the placement of utility wires underground and other scenic and safety improvements should also be pursued, contingent on the involvement and support of the local and neighborhood residents.

Goal C:

Protect and enhance the quality of life of Stamford's neighborhoods, addressing land use transitions, community resources, traffic, and environmental conditions.

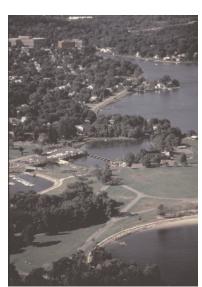
In many ways, quality of life concerns in the Cove-East Side and Shippan neighborhoods revolve around the interest of residents in preserving a genuine suburban neighborhood amidst constant pressures toward a more urban atmosphere. To district residents, for example, Cove Island Park is their local neighborhood park, though it is also a major citywide attraction. Residents long for the suburban streetscape,

and are upset by small multifamily projects and on-street parking. A number of the city's most capacity-deficient intersections are located in the northwestern portion of Cove-East Side, resulting from the hodgepodge of industrial and commercial uses in the immediate area, the concentration of offices to the south, and the many district residents going to and from Downtown and the Turnpike. The district also has to deal with the seasonal traffic generated by Cove Island Park. It comes down to the simple fact that there are only so many through roads in and out of the neighborhood.

Strategies:

1C1. Re-design and program Cove Island Park with thought to make it more of a neighborhood asset. The entry should be redesigned—with better enforcement in mind, and to provide footpaths and bicycle paths at the south end of the park. Cove Island Park should be connected to Cummings Park via foot and bicycle paths. Should it prove inadequate or obsolete, the City should consider relocating the Terry Connors Ice Skating Rink out of Cove Island Park so as to decrease over-intensive use of the park. The bird sanctuary at the south end of Cove Island should remain protected. While Cove Island Park is and should remain a citywide resource, it is the most frequently visited park in the city, and local concerns regarding traffic and crowding deserve full consideration.

1C2. Enlarge and enhance the connections between Cummings Park East and West. These two parks are separated by a road with a pair of small developments (one residential and one commercial) at its northern end, and another pair of



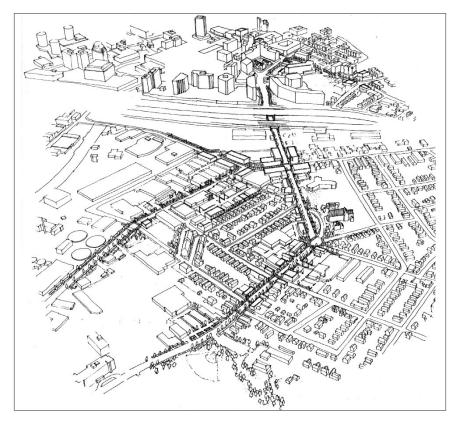
Cove Island Park should be designed and programmed as a neighborhood asset.

larger developments (also one residential and one commercial) at its southern end. Ideally, the smaller developments would be acquired in order to unite the two parks. Long-term consideration could be given to a public elementary school in this area.

1C3. Enlarge the Rogers Magnet and K.T. Murphy Elementary School grounds; explore community use of schools after school hours. These two schools are on small sites; and the K.T. Murphy site is the smallest in the school system. In addition, according to National Recreation and Parks Association standards, Stamford falls short when it comes to the amount of land dedicated to neighborhood and school-associated parks. One option for the Rogers

School is to expand northward. The Murphy School might also expand northward, to front Cove Road. This would provide the room to expand both schools and park facilities. Both schools also provide the opportunity for creative linkages after school hours, e.g., use of classrooms for job training, use of the auditorium for performances and community meetings, use of the gym and rooms for after-school programs, etc. The *K.T. Murphy Safe Route to School Plan* should be carried out, and another Safe Route to School Plan should be prepared for the Rogers Magnet School.

- 1C4. Promote "Main Street" and transit-friendly development at and near the Shippan Avenue and Cove Road neighborhood business districts. This would involve employment of either the PDD (Preservation and Design District) or MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay District) zoning tools. The plans should be modeled on the Glenbrook and Springdale charrettes organized by the Regional Plan Association (RPA) in connection with this Master Plan, including the full engagement of neighborhood residents, civic associations, property owners and businesses. These plans should feature: (1) continuous sidewalks, street trees, pedestrianscaled lighting and on-street parking along the main street itself, (2) easy pedestrian crossings and similar enhancements, (3) pocket parks and use of the larger Cummings Park and proposed Rogers School grounds as "village greens," (4) orientation of stores to the front sidewalk, (5) development of contextual and in-fill buildings, (6) rationalized and inter-connected or shared parking lots, (7) opportunity for "upstairs living" as well as offices on upper floors, (8) façade, storefront and signage guidelines, (9) buried overhead and power lines, and (10) attractive and strategically sited bus shelters. Once the PDD standards are in place, tax incentives can be employed to promote renovations and improvements that bring existing property into greater design compliance; this is an especially useful tool in commercial districts, where there is a turnover of stores and businesses.
- **1C5.** Reorganize the mixed-use and industrial areas between Shippan and Magee Avenues. This area provides an opportunity to create new connections in the neighborhood, rationalize land uses, and enhance the appearance and function of the industrial area. The irregular leftover spaces used for parking, loading and storage could be consolidated. Some of the new spaces could be dedicated to shared parking and loading operations. Rationalization of these activities would help manage small truck traffic within the district and minimize conflicts with nearby residential uses. Other new spaces could become shared plazas with landscaping. (The Urban Design report illustrates one way in which these principles might play out in this area.)
- **1C6. Tie traffic calming to arterial enhancements.** Residents participating in the Master Plan workshops expressed particular concern about Cove Road, Harbor



Urban design improvements along key corridors and in the mixed-use areas can create a more attractive neighborhood gateway.

Drive, Lockwood Avenue, Seaside Avenue, Shippan Avenue, Sound View Avenue, Weed Avenue and the vicinity of Cove Island Park. But they also expressed concern that one street's traffic calming is another's traffic inducing. Thus, traffic calming along Lockwood, Seaside and Weed Avenues should be coupled with a possible alternative north/south road through the Clairol site, which may be made available for development. Pedestrian enhancements along the commercial portion of Shippan Avenue should be coupled with design improvements suggested for Magee Avenue, and a safer connection between Elm Street and Magee Avenue. As redevelopment goes forward, elements of the street grid should be completed, to reduce convoluted and congestion-inducing traffic patterns along Cove Road. For example: if the Clairol site is redeveloped, east/west connections could be provided in addition to the all-important north/south route. Finally, Harbor Drive is a popular place to stroll and jog, and should be upgraded with a sidewalk, perhaps paid for in connection with any proposed commercial development or redevelopment in the vicinity.

1C7. Provide improved, non-vehicular access along Weed Avenue. This is necessary to offset a now dangerous condition as joggers and walkers commonly use this busy street. However, a Weed Avenue sidewalk or other feasible alternative would have to be designed so as to discourage worsening traffic and visitation

to a neighborhood that is aggravated by traffic going to and from Cove Island Park. Traffic calming along with the placement of utility wires underground and other scenic and safety improvements should also be pursued, contingent on the involvement and support of the local and neighborhood residents.

- 1C8. Create a network of bicycle routes, especially connecting residential areas to the neighborhood's parks, schools and two neighborhood business districts. Bicycle lanes along major roads also have the advantage of narrowing and thus traffic-calming these roads. Plans should be generated with community participation and sufficient analysis to evaluate and hopefully allay concerns, which have been raised, that bicycle routes will promote a significant increase in the number of non-neighborhood residents traveling to and through the neighborhood.
- 1C9. Re-examine land use designations to reduce the opportunity for intensification of use in low-density residential areas. Specifically, the City land use map has been amended to bring the allowed density down, to match prevailing current conditions. Several commercial districts have been consolidated for the same reason.
- **1C10.** Protect the high, unmodified bluffs on the eastern side of the Shippan Peninsula from any development that accelerates natural erosion processes. This encompasses the following three directives: (1) establishing setback lines from edge of bluffs for siting of new development; (2) designating areas for the public acquisition of conservation easements; and (3) ensuring that building practices during the construction phase, as well as final structural and site designs, incorporate appropriate erosion control measures.
- 1C11. Manage and enhance the natural and manmade beaches, in order to maximize recreational opportunities, protect natural values, and stabilize the beach system. This encompasses four actions: (1) developing a comprehensive beach management program that promotes public access, provides adequate and appropriate facilities and ensures the long-term, high-quality recreational use of Stamford's public beaches; (2) guiding development of land adjacent to private beaches in order to preserve and perpetuate their scenic and recreational value and use; (3) controlling activities on land adjacent to public and private beaches so as to retain, restore and enhance the form, volume and stability of the existing beach system; and (4) strictly enforcing regulations governing the siting and construction of jetties, groins, breakwaters, seawalls, and other structural elements that affect natural accretion and depositional processes along the shore.
- 1C12. Preserve and restore the major intertidal habitats in the East Branch



Environmental preservation is a priority along the waterfront.

for both their biological and aesthetic values. The City should rigorously enforce regulations prohibiting illegal pollutant discharges and debris disposal in intertidal areas. This policy also entails: (1) maintaining and rebuilding deteriorating bulkheads which allow debris to enter intertidal areas; and (2) protecting all intertidal areas that are habitat for shellfish or other biological resources from adverse development activities.

- **1C13.** Maintain tidal wetlands in their natural state; and emphasize the value of State-mapped wetlands in Cove-East Side. The City should (1) prohibit uses adjacent to wetlands which degrade or imperil natural wetland values and processes; (2) require mitigation where the destruction of tidal wetland is unavoidable; (3) discourage, if not prohibit walls and structural modifications that cut off the natural supply of sediments; and (4) provide tidal wetland setbacks.
- 1C14. Retain the freshwater wetlands in Cummings and Cove Island Parks in their undisturbed state; protect the Noroton River flowing into Stamford Harbor; and protect Holly Pond from point and non-point pollution sources. To meet these objectives, the City should regularly monitor water quality, identify violations, and enforce existing regulations, including National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits. Upland control measures include minimum setbacks, erosion and sedimentation controls, and vegetative buffering. These should be adopted and enforced for all new development adjacent to watercourses.
- 1C15. Protect and minimize danger to life and property from coastal flooding and the effects of wave impact in Westcott Cove, Shippan and other potentially hazardous areas. This will require rigorous application of the floodplain management guidelines of the National Flood Insurance Program to all new development. A four-part program is envisioned: (1) evaluation of the degree of risk associated with different types and intensities of development in floodprone areas; (2) design of a comprehensive flood control program, incorporating structural and nonstructural protection measures; (3) enforcement of existing flood-proofing regulations governing all new development, including alterations and reconstruction of existing structures, in flood-prone areas; and (4) incorporation of appropriate flood protection measures in siting requirements for storage or disposal of hazardous or other potentially polluting materials.
- 1C15. Undertake remedial programs for minimizing coastal erosion in Westcott Cove, the area east of Wallacks Point, and the Shippan Peninsula. In these areas, the City should enforce regulations relating to illegal structures that promote beach erosion. The City should also educate property owners and

the public as to the range of permissible and beneficial measures to address beach erosion.

1C17. Maintain Jacks Island and Grass Island as conservation and natural habitat areas with uses restricted to water-dependent activities; maintain Vincent Island as both a passive, marine-oriented recreational area and as a wildlife habitat area. In order to preserve Vincent Island for public open space use in its natural setting, the City could explore less than fee-simple acquisition (e.g., acquisition of development rights, or donation to a land trust).

1C18. Develop, maintain and restore shellfish concentration areas in Stamford Harbor, Westcott Cove and Cove Harbor. The City should: (1) develop a comprehensive shellfish management program to be incorporated into the Municipal Coastal Program; (2) rigorously enforce National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits; and (3) identify non-point sources of water pollution affecting shellfish areas and develop mitigation programs.

1C19. Maintain and improve coastal water quality. Priority attention should be paid to the waters of Stamford Harbor, Westcott Cove, Cove Harbor, and Holly Pond. The City should insure that the applicable water quality standards mandated by Federal and State statutes and regulations are achieved, and further carry out a water quality management program that contributes to an abundant and healthy marine resource base, as well as provides a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities. Specifically, the City should (1) develop a water quality monitoring and enforcement program which is legally sound, financially feasible, and administratively practical; (2) establish priorities and schedules for addressing known pollution problems; (3) prohibit the construction of facilities in open water bodies that impede tidal flushing; (4) strengthen harbor policing and the enforcement of regulations governing waste disposal associated with recreational boating activities; (5) develop a coordinated, inter-municipal program (with the Town of Darien) designed to improve water quality in Holly Pond; and (6) make every attempt to provide swimmable and fishable waters for the citizens of Stamford.

Goal D:

Create a vibrant, seven-days-a-week, pedestrian-friendly Downtown focused both on the Transportation Center and the historic core area to its immediate north.

Most of Cove-East Side and Shippan is built out. But there are some significant development opportunities. These include the large Clairol industrial site, should this become available for development. The intensity of development should be capped, mindful of the broad policy of promoting Downtown development above neighborhood development. But targeted redevelopment can be tolerated in connection with the City's waterfront policies and other priorities shared with the community.

Strategies:

- **1D1.** Retain the current floor area ratio (FAR) caps for office and retail development in industrial districts outside of Downtown. The FAR cap on office uses should continue to be applied in industrial districts. So should the general prohibition of retail development.
- **1D2.** Allow office and high-density housing in specified instances, in connection with waterfront access and marinas. Harbor Drive is lined with offices and apartments allowed in connection with public access and marinas. Another office development has been approved at the foot of Magee Avenue, linked to dedication of a waterfront park. An office building and small apartment complex at the foot of Sea View Avenue should, if ever redeveloped, be tied to improved public access. These exceptions to the general policy of directing development to Downtown are justified by the City's interest in promoting public enjoyment of the waterfront.
- 1D3. Earmark the Clairol Site as a MOD (Mixed-Use Overlay) district. Clairol now uses this very large site, but it is reasonable to assume that at some point over the next 20 years, the status of the site might change. The site should be designated as Manufacturing General, with a MOD overlay. The overlay would provide the opportunity for redevelopment in fulfillment of a detailed plan directed by the Planning Board with full community participation. Elements of this plan could include re-connecting the neighborhoods that frame the site; providing a new north/south road to relieve traffic on Lockwood and Seaside Avenues; and/or setting aside space for a new school or park. It might also include mixed-income development, perhaps in cooperation with the Housing Authority, which would like to redevelop their adjoining Oak Park complex. (An application of the principles is illustrated in the Urban Design report.)
- **1D4.** Carry out and expand upon the Stamford Urban Transitway project. This infrastructure project foresees a direct connection between Route 1 and Downtown's Transportation Center (Myrtle Avenue, Jefferson Street and Dock Street). It would enhance vehicular, transit, bicycle and pedestrian access between Cove-East Side and Downtown. A Phase 2 component would involve extending the Transitway eastward, along Myrtle Avenue, to East Main Street.